

**DC 508 701: Writing for TV Thesis I**

T 5:45 – 9:00 PM, CDM Center 924

*Updated 9/15/14*

Instructor: Heather Ash

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Phone: 312-362-8381 (general #)

Office hours: Tuesday 3:00 – 4:30pm

Course Management system: D2L

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2014 - Last day to drop classes with no penalty

Tuesday, Oct. 28, 2014 - Last day to withdraw from AQ2014 classes

**Description**

In this first course of a two-part sequence, students will pitch, develop and write:

1. The first draft of a complete one-hour teleplay and series bible  
- **OR** -
2. A revised draft of a complete half-hour teleplay and series bible, **PLUS:**  
A concept for a spec episode (to be written during winter quarter)

The thesis project serves as the culminating piece in the student's MFA writing portfolio, and must be approved by a thesis committee in order for a student to graduate.

**Objectives**

- Close examination of the project-selection process
- Thorough, professional, character- and deadline-driven story development
- Exposure to a professional writing pace
- Continued mastery of cinematic writing style and narrative technique
- Fostering and maintaining the environment of a professional writers' room
- Refining and advancing the practices of giving and receiving criticism
- Consistent delivery of outstanding creative work every single week

**Outcomes**

- Instructor-approved completion of a professional-level outline
- Delivery of a completed first draft of a television pilot and bible  
(+ pitch for spec episode and analysis of existing series for half-hour writers)

**Note: This completed first (or revised) draft of pilot + series bible is due to committee members by 6pm on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Pitch and analysis due to Heather only on same day.**

**Required Texts**

- 1) *Writing the Pilot* by William Rabkin, c. 2011 – ISBN: 9780615533612
- 2) Various readings and resources will be posted to D2L and/or handed out. These will be tailored to the specific questions and needs of our class as the semester progresses. The intent is to educate, not overwhelm.

Recommended sources

1) CHILDREN OF TENDHU podcast, episode 12 – “So You Wanna Write a TV Pilot” (The whole 13-episode series is absolute gold, but for our purposes, #12 is most relevant.)

Available on iTunes or at

<http://childrenoftendu.libsyn.com/episode-12-so-you-wanna-write-a-television-pilot>

2) *Writing the TV Drama Series* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.) by Pamela Douglas, c. 2011 – ISBN: 978-1615930586

OR

3) *The TV Writer's Workbook* by Ellen Sandler, c. 2007 – ISBN: 978-0385340502

4) *The Comic Toolbox* by John Vorhaus, c. 1994 – ISBN: 978-1879505216

Preparation for first class

- Three pitches for pilots due on 9/16
- Your Top 5 in three categories, posted to D2L discussion board
- Read Rabkin's book (it's only 89 pages) by the first class session. It is a terrific breakdown of writing the pilot and will help you identify potential pitfalls with your pitches. We will discuss this text throughout the quarter.

Schedule

Week	Date	Half-hour	One-hour
1	9/16	Course intros, idea pitches, and discussion. <b>DUE:</b> Rabkin book, three pilot pitches	
2	9/23	<b>DUE:</b> Revised idea pitches with written loglines Discuss: Overview questions, character map & bios How to pitch	
	9/26	<i>Group A Committee Pitches, 2:30 – 5:30</i>	
3	9/30	Group A: Overview questions, character map, bios due	
	10/3	<i>Group B Committee Pitches, 2:30 – 5:30</i>	
		<b>ALL PILOTS IN-PROGRESS</b>	
4	10/7	Group B: Overview questions, character map, bios due Group A: Outline of 1 <sup>st</sup> draft due	
5	10/14	Group B: Outline of 1 <sup>st</sup> draft due	
6	10/21	Group A: Revised outline & Act 1 due	Group A: Revised outline & Act 1 due
7	10/28	Group B: Revised outline & Act 1 due	Group B: Revised outline & Act 1 due
8	11/4	Group A: Through Act 2, 1 <sup>st</sup> draft bible due	Group A: Through Act 2, 1 <sup>st</sup> draft bible due
9	11/11	Group B: Through Act 2, 1 <sup>st</sup> draft bible due	Group B: Through Act 2, 1 <sup>st</sup> draft bible due
10	11/18	Group A: Select spec show, 3 pitches and show analysis due	Group A: Through Act 4 due
11	11/25	Group B: Select spec show, 3 pitches and show analysis due	Group B: Through Act 4 due
Final	12/15 6pm	First draft* pilot and bible due Revised logline for spec episode	First draft* pilot and bible due

\* “First draft” means “not the vomit/spew draft.” You have taken all the feedback from the first 11 weeks and incorporated it, taken out the typos, eliminated the stupid stuff. It's still not ready for prime time, but neither is it a complete, unholy mess.

<b>GROUP A (committee pitches 9/26)</b>	<b>GROUP B (committee pitches 10/3)</b>
Megan Binnie Celia Blundo Candice Hudson Allison Gilbert Casey Gillespie Marcus McCoy Jessica Knackstedt	Hannah Leskosky Kelly Woodall Daniel Greeney Fred Maxon Jared Pettit Tyler Bourdeau

### Procedures

Classes may include lectures but will always feature a workshop session. It is essential that all students submit their work on time, and that all students pre-read the material thoroughly before class to make detailed notes. Your participation is vital, and is the only way we can be efficient and effective in our discussions.

We will focus on the “big-picture” notes in class. Smaller page notes will be handed or sent to each writer, from each writer, in each and every class. When the reading load becomes heavy, students will be divided into two groups to maximize attention on the greatest amount of material possible.

**Work must be submitted to D2L by 2:00PM on Sundays.** If it is not delivered on time, it will not be critiqued and you will receive no credit for it.

### Software

Final Draft is industry standard, but Movie Magic Screenwriter 6 is also used. You should own one of these and be using it by now. ALL work must be submitted in PDF format to avoid any platform issues.

### Grading

40%	Total of weekly scores for writing work
20%	Weekly participation (includes comments)
20%	Completed & approved outline (midterm grade)
20%	Completed first draft and series bible (the “final”)
<b>100%</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

A = 93-100	C = 73-77
A- = 90-92	C- = 70-72
B+ = 88-89	D+ = 68-69
B = 83-87	D = 63-67
B- = 80-82	D- = 60-62
C+ = 78-79	F = 0-59

Standards for Achievement:

#### Grade A:

Student performs in an outstanding way. Student exhibits achievement and craftsmanship in all work. Creative criteria is exceeded and student challenges him/herself in project development. Student exhibits commitment to expanding ideas, vocabulary and performance.

**Grade B:**

Student performs beyond the requirement of the project. Student exhibits above average progress and craftsmanship. A creative criterion is exceeded. Student exhibits above average interest in expanding idea, vocabulary, and performance.

**Grade C:**

Criteria of assignment is met, and all requirements are fulfilled. Student shows average quality work and minimum time and effort on projects. Student shows moderate interest.

**Grade D:**

Student performance is uneven and below average. Requirements for projects are only partially fulfilled. Minimal interest is shown and attendance, participation and involvement are inadequate.

**Grade F**

Student fails to meet minimum course requirements and shows no interest. Levels of participation and craftsmanship are extremely poor. Student's attendance is inadequate.

Attendance

Tardiness and absences are counterproductive for you and your classmates. Contact me ASAP if you will be late or absent. Unapproved absences and/or tardies forfeit an entire letter grade.

Behavior

We must respect each other, our collaboration, and the work at hand. It is part of being a professional writer. Be truthful but sensitive when giving notes. Be prepared to solve problems instead of just pointing them out. Personal attacks and disruptive actions will not be tolerated.

What happens in thesis stays in thesis. Please respect the privacy of people's personal stories and ideas by limiting that discussion to the room.

Electronics

Professional writers do not sit in meetings staring at a screen. They talk to each other and their employers. In fact, many writers' rooms now have a "no electronics" policy. If I so much as suspect you of online activities unrelated to the task at hand, you will lose laptop privileges for the entire semester.

Phones should be on silent or vibrate and put away. Do not text when class is in session.

Integrity

Plagiarism will get you fired and sued professionally, and it will earn you an immediate F in this course. Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the *Student Handbook* or by visiting <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>.

Disabilities

Students who feel that they need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their needs as soon as possible.

Alterations

The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time. Students will be apprised of any and all changes with clear instructions should they occur.

*From the University...*

### **Online Course Evaluations**

Evaluations are a way for students to provide valuable feedback regarding their instructor and the course. Detailed feedback will enable the instructor to continuously tailor teaching methods and course content to meet the learning goals of the course and the academic needs of the students. They are a requirement of the course and are key to continue to provide you with the highest quality of teaching. The evaluations are anonymous; the instructor and administration do not track who entered what responses. A program is used to check if the student completed the evaluations, but the evaluation is completely separate from the student's identity. Since 100% participation is our goal, students are sent periodic reminders over three weeks. Students do not receive reminders once they complete the evaluation. Students complete the evaluation online in CampusConnect.

### **Academic Policies**

All students are required to manage their class schedules each term in accordance with the deadlines for enrolling and withdrawing as indicated in the University Academic Calendar. Information on enrollment, withdrawal, grading and incompletes can be found at: [cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment](http://cdm.depaul.edu/enrollment).

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

This course will be subject to the academic integrity policy passed by faculty. More information can be found at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu/>.

The university and school policy on plagiarism can be summarized as follows: Students in this course should be aware of the strong sanctions that can be imposed against someone guilty of plagiarism. If proven, a charge of plagiarism could result in an automatic F in the course and possible expulsion. The strongest of sanctions will be imposed on anyone who submits as his/her own work any assignment which has been prepared by someone else. If you have any questions or doubts about what plagiarism entails or how to properly acknowledge source materials be sure to consult the instructor.

### **Withdrawal**

Students who withdraw from the course do so by using the Campus Connection system (<http://campusconnect.depaul.edu>). Withdrawals processed via this system are effective the day on which they are made. Simply ceasing to attend, or notifying the instructor, or nonpayment of tuition, does not constitute an official withdrawal from class and will result in academic as well as financial penalty.

### **Retroactive Withdrawal**

This policy exists to assist students for whom extenuating circumstances prevented them from meeting the withdrawal deadline. During their college career students may be allowed one medical/personal administrative withdrawal and one college office administrative withdrawal, each for one or more courses in a single term. Repeated requests will not be considered. Submitting an appeal for retroactive withdrawal does not guarantee approval.

College office appeals for CDM students must be submitted online via MyCDM. The deadlines for submitting appeals are as follows:

Autumn Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent winter quarter

Winter Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent spring quarter

Spring Quarter: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

Summer Terms: Last day of the last final exam of the subsequent autumn quarter

**Excused Absence**

In order to petition for an excused absence, students who miss class due to illness or significant personal circumstances should complete the Absence Notification process through the Dean of Students office. The form can be accessed at <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/dos/forms.html>. Students must submit supporting documentation alongside the form. The professor reserves the sole right whether to offer an excused absence and/or academic accommodations for an excused absence.

**Incomplete**

An incomplete grade is a special, temporary grade that may be assigned by an instructor when unforeseeable circumstances prevent a student from completing course requirements by the end of the term and when otherwise the student had a record of satisfactory progress in the course. CDM policy requires the student to initiate the request for incomplete grade before the end of the term in which the course is taken. Prior to submitting the incomplete request, the student must discuss the circumstances with the instructor. Students may initiate the incomplete request process in MyCDM.

- All incomplete requests must be approved by the instructor of the course and a CDM Associate Dean. Only exceptions cases will receive such approval.
- If approved, students are required to complete all remaining course requirement independently in consultation with the instructor by the deadline indicated on the incomplete request form.
- By default, an incomplete grade will automatically change to a grade of F after two quarters have elapsed (excluding summer) unless another grade is recorded by the instructor.
- An incomplete grade does NOT grant the student permission to attend the same course in a future quarter.

**Students with Disabilities**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate accommodation based on your needs, contact the instructor as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week of class), and make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at: [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu).

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